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PRINCIPLES

OF

Liberty of Conscience

Stated and Defended :

In a LETTER to a Friend.

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By GWITMARPSCHELDON.

William Wishart, D.D.



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Principles of Liberty of Conscience

Stated and Defended :

In a Letter to a Friend.

S I R,

ACCORDING to your Desire, and my Promise, I here send you my deliberate Thoughts upon the Subject of our late Conversation. I need not put you in mind of the particular Occasion of it : for indeed, for my own part, I am ready to embrace every proper Opportunity of declaring my Sentiments in favours of the glorious Principles of *Liberty of Conscience* ; which I think are of great Importance, to the Peace and Welfare of Mankind, to the Honour of Christianity, and the Defence of our Reformation from Popery.

After this Introduction, and what lately pass'd in Conversation, I am sure you'll not be surprized when I frankly own to you, that I look upon all Use of Force or Punishment in the Affairs of Conscience or Religion, considered *as such*, to be an

Infringement of the natural and unalienable Rights of Mankind ; inconsistent with the proper Office and Duty of the Civil Magistrate ; contrary to, and subversive of, the Nature of true Religion ; and peculiarly opposite to the Spirit and Genius of Christianity : I cannot but reckon it the natural Right of every Man to enquire and judge for himself in the Affairs of Religion ; and to be left at Liberty, without any violent Check or Controul from any other Man, to act agreeably to the Dictates of his Conscience in these Matters ; so far as he does no Hurt to others about him, nor disturbs the Peace of human Society : And whereas other natural Rights are *alienable* ; and may, when Men enter into Society, be given up to the Governing Powers for the Good of the Community ; this Right of Conscience is absolutely *unalienable* ; because it cannot, without Sin, be given up : Seeing to enquire and judge for himself in Affairs of Religion, and act agreeably to the Light of his own Mind in these Matters, is not only every Man's *Right*, but his *indispensable Duty* : And whoever implicitly submits to the Dictates of any other Man in the Matters of Religion, or follows his Direction in those Affairs contrary to the Light and Conviction of his own Mind, acts a Part most undutiful towards God ; and unworthy of a rational Creature, subject and accountable to Him : And certainly this Piece of slavish Impiety is as much committed, by a Man's *suppressing* within his own Breast what in his Conscience he thinks it his Duty to profess ; as by *professing* what he does not believe.

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The Civil Magistrate has his Name from this; that it is his proper Province to take care of the Interests of Civil Society, in which the Preservation of private Rights is included: It was for the Protection and Defence of their natural and civil Rights, that Men entred into civil Society; and the Necessity of the Civil Magistrate's Office arises from its Usefulness for the Good of human Society in its civil Concerns: For this end, therefore, that Office was ordained of G O D: For, take away the Supposition of the *Good of Society*, and all Necessity and Occasion for the Office of the Civil Magistrate is destroyed; without *this*, there never would have been such an Office, either appointed by G O D, or voluntarily agreed to by Men. Therefore, I look upon it to be the proper Business and Duty of the Civil Magistrate, agreeably to the Nature and Design of his Office, to preserve the Peace of the Society where he bears Rule; to protect all the Members of it in the Enjoyment of their natural and civil Rights; and defend them, in the Exercise of these Rights, from all Hurt or Violence: This Protection and Defence, I think the Civil Magistrate is, by the Duty of his Place, bound to give to all such Subjects as quietly submit to the Government, and live peaceably with their Neighbours; refrain from doing Injury to others about them, or disturbing the publick Peace: * And among these

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* Certainly the Magistrate is to protect every one, and every Thing, in their own Right, from the Violence and Injury of untuly Men. *Owen* on Toleration, in Sermons and Tracts, F. p. 306. The Defence and Protection of erring Persons from Violence

natural Rights, the Right of making an open Profession of their Religion, and worshipping GOD according to their Consciences, without fear of Man, is certainly one of the first and most important; and therefore I cannot but reckon it inconsistent with the proper Office and Duty of the Civil Magistrate to make use of that Power of the Society, with which he is entrusted for the Defence of Men's natural Rights, to suppress by Methods of Violence the Exercise of this Right of Conscience. And, in my Judgment, it is equally a Violation of the Rights of Conscience, to restrain a Man by Force from professing what his Conscience leads him to profess, or from performing such Worship as he believes GOD requires of him; as to force him to a Profession of what he does not believe, or compel him by Violence to a way of Worship he thinks sinful; human Terrors being equally made use of, in both Cases, to induce him knowingly and wilfully to sin against GOD.

As to the Nature of Religion, I observe, that a *free Choice* is the *very Soul* of it; and there can be no true Religion, but what flows from an inward Persuasion of Mind concerning the Truth of the Principles embraced and professed, and a Conviction of Duty towards GOD: A Man is not a whit the more religious, for professing the very best Principles, and espousing the most excellent
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Violence and Injury, in those Things wherein they have a Right, is a mere dealing for the Preservation of human Society, by the Defence of Persons not acting against the Rules thereof. For this cause the Emperors of old still allowed the *Novatians* the Liberty of Worship, p. 308, *ibid.*

and divine System of Doctrines; or complying with and conforming to the most perfect way of Worship; farther than this Profession, or Compliance, proceeds from an inward Conviction and Persuasion of the Truth of these Doctrines, and the Acceptableness of that way of Worship to GOD: Now this inward Conviction and Persuasion can never be the Effect of Force: Violence or Punishment may force Men to make an outward Profession, contrary to their inward Persuasion; or comply with outward Forms of Worship, while in their Hearts they *abhor the Offering of the LORD*; or may restrain them from that Profession of what they believe to be true, which their Conscience prompts them to, or the Performance of that Worship which they believe GOD requires of them; but can never be of any Use to enlighten the Mind or gain the Heart, without which there can be no true Religion. In a word, the Use of Force or Punishment in the Affairs of Conscience and Religion can only tend to promote *Hypocrisy*; and is, therefore, subversive of *true Religion*.

The Abettors of Force in the Affairs of Religion, or in dealing with Opposers of the Truth, seem to be sensible that Methods of Violence cannot directly produce Conviction; when they plead that they are for the Use of these only against such erroneous Persons as are obstinate against Conviction; or to induce Men to attend to and examine the Evidence offered, which will unavoidably issue in a Conviction of the Truth. But they who talk thus, seem to have forgot that evident Maxim of the Poet, *Male verum examinat omnis corruptus iudex*: A Man is effectually hindered

dred from examining fairly, so far as he is laid under any strong Biass to *one* Side of the Question, which does not arise from Evidence and the Merits of the Cause: And therefore the Use of Force to deter a Man from one kind of religious Profession, and compel him to another, is so far from being a proper Inducement to attend to and examine the Evidence of the Truth; that it tends rather to hinder a Man from examining, or render him partial in his Enquiries, and to deter him from an Attention which, for ought he knows, may prove dangerous: It also tends to give him a Prejudice against the way which seems to stand in need of such methods to support it. Besides, as a learned and worthy Author on this Argument † justly observes, “ ’Tis impossible for any Man to “ know certainly, how far Men have or have not “ considered, or consequently in what Cases Pun- “ nishments may be useful or necessary to this “ End; and therefore the plain *English* of this “ seemingly plausible Notion is, that Men are to “ suffer these Punishments not till they *consider*, “ but till they *change*; and the *Hypocrite* by dis- “ sembling his Sentiments escapes, though he has “ not considered, while the *sincere* Man, who has “ consider’d, but cannot find that Conviction o- “ thers think he may, continues to suffer without “ hope or possibility of Relief.” “ This, says another excellent Author *, “ is indeed a new “ Method of teaching. The Learner is compel- “ led to believe a Conclusion for fear of Punish- “ ment;

† Synge’s Serm. on *Luke* xiv. 23.

* *Werensfels* against the Authority of the Magistrate over Con- science, the *English* Translation, p. 77, 78.

ment; the Design of which is only to make him
 “ examine the Premisses.” But, to proceed,

The Use of Force or Punishment in the Affairs of Conscience appears to me likewise peculiarly opposite to the Spirit of Christianity, and to the Design of our blessed Saviour’s coming into the World, who came not to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them. Christianity is founded in Love and Goodness: Its great Design is to proclaim the divine *Good-will towards Men*, and to promote *Peace on Earth*: It recommends itself, by the shining Evidences of Truth and a divine Original, to our free Choice: It demands a Reception upon the footing of a fair Trial, and a rational Conviction; requires us to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*: *The Weapons of our Warfare*, in its Defence and Propagation, *are not carnal*, but that *Armour of Righteousness*, these proper Methods of inward Conviction and Persuasion, which are suited to gain a willing People, and mighty through GOD to the bringing of the Thoughts of Men into Captivity to the Obedience of Christ; namely, a *Manifestation of the Truth to every Man’s Conscience*: And, *the Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.* * For these Reasons, I cannot

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* Gospel-constitutions, in the case of Heresy or Error, seem not to favour any Course of Violence, I mean of civil Penalties. Foretold it is that Heresies must be, 1 Cor. xi. 19. but this for the manifesting of those that are approved, not the destroying of those that are not. — Admonitions, and Excommunication upon rejecting of Admonition, are the highest Constitutions (I suppose) against such Persons: *waiting with all Patience upon them that oppose themselves, if at any Time God will give them Repen-*

not think, that the Civil Magistrate, by becoming Christian, can acquire any Right to enforce the Christian Religion upon his Subjects by civil Penalties: Not only, because I find not the least Intimation in Scripture of any Power of this Sort given him by the great Author of our Faith; but also, because such a Manner of enforcing Christianity appears to me quite disagreeable to the Spirit and Genius of the Christian Religion; and to these plain Declarations of our blessed Saviour, that his *Kingdom is not of this World*, and that he *came not to destroy Mens Lives but to save them*.

The Arguments for the Use of Force in the Affairs of Conscience or Religion, which some draw from the Commands given to the *Jewish* Magistrates to punish Idolaters, or Enticers to Idolatry, with Death, seem to me to arise from a Misunderstanding of the Ground and Reason of these Commands. I look upon them to be a Part, not of the Moral Law given to the *Jews*; but of that Political Law, concerning which our *Confession of Faith*, Chap. xix. § 4. says, "to them also, as a Body Politick, he gave fundry Judicial Laws, which expired together with the State of that People; not obliging any other now further, than the general Equity thereof may require."

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Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth. Imprisoning, banishing, slaying, is scarcely a patient waiting. God doth not so wait upon Unbelievers. Perhaps those who call for the Sword on earth, are as unacquainted with their own Spirits, as those that call'd for Fire from Heaven, *Luke xi*. And perhaps the Parable of the Tares gives in a positive Rule as to this whole Business: I shall not fear to assert, that the Answers unto it, borrowed by our Divines from *Bellarmino*, will not endure the Trial. *Owen*, u. 6. p. 314.

The Law now mentioned, I reckon to have been Part of this Political Law; and to have had its Reason and Foundation in a thing which was very peculiar in their Constitution: namely, That **GOD** condescended to interpose among them in a visible and conspicuous manner; and formed them into a State, of which He himself was the Head and supreme Magistrate: And therefore, Idolatry, among them, was not only a Sin against **GOD**, as the Creator and Governor of the World, the only Object of Divine Worship and Adoration; but was also the Crime of high Treason against the supreme Head and King of their State; and, as such, was to be punished with Death*. But there is now no such *Theocracy* to be found in the World. The Institution of our blessed Sa-

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* **GOD** at that Time governed his People in such a visible and sensible Manner, that his Subjects could no more be ignorant, that *Jehovah* was their King, than the *Macedonians* could help knowing that they had no other King but *Alexander*. *Werensfels*, u. s. p. 81.

As to the Case of the Seducer, *Deut.* xiii. the learned Dr. *Owen* observes several Discrepancies between that, and the Case of punishing Hereticks: Particularly, “(4.) This Seducer was to die without Mercy. There was no Expiation of his Transgression, without his own Blood: But now this Place is urged for all Kind of Restraint and Punishment whatsoever. Now where **GOD** requires Blood, is it allowed to Man to commute at an inferior Rate? So I confess it is urged. But yet what lies at the Bottom, in the Chambers of their Bellies, who plead for the Power of the Magistrate to punish erring Persons, from these, and such like Places as these, is too apparent. Blood is there: swiftly or slowly they walk to the Chambers of Death. (7.) This Law contains the Sanction of the third Commandment, as the Whole was a Rule of the *Jewish* Polity in the Land of *Canaan*. This amongst us is generally conceived not binding, as such, u. s. p. 294.”

viour introduces no particular or extraordinary Scheme of Politicks; but leaves the several Civil Constitutions in the World, and the Civil Rights both of Governors and Subjects, as it found them: And our blessed Lord never gives the least Intimation that His Commands (which cannot be obeyed as they ought, but when they are obeyed from the *Heart*) should be enforced by the Awe and Power of the secular Arm: But, on the contrary, hath plainly told us, that his Church is His Kingdom, in which He alone is King; and that this *Kingdom is not of this World*.

Nay, so far is the Application of Civil Pains and Penalties in the Affairs of Conscience and Religion, from being agreeable to the Spirit of the Christian Institution; that it appears plainly in the Prophetical Part of the *N. T.* to be made one of the distinguishing Characters of that grand Apostacy from the *Truth and Spirit* of Christianity (while the *Name*, and something of the *Form* of it is retained) which is there foretold; *Rev. xiii. 15, 17. That as many as would not worship the Image of the Beast should be killed; and that no Man might buy or sell save he that had the Mark:* Accordingly, we may observe in Fact, that the Use of the Sword, to propagate what they call the *Catholick Faith*, and extirpate what they call *Heresy*, has been the constant and avowed Principle and Practice of the Church of *Rome*. And I own it contributes not a little to increase my Abhorrence of all Persecution for Conscience Sake, and of the Principles by which it is supported; to observe, in the Practice of that Apostate Church, what Havock it has made in the Earth; how it has de-

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populated Nations, and laid waste flourishing Countries; what Cruelties and Barbarities it has caused; enough to fill any Person with Horror, who has the least Remains in him of the Spirit of Christianity, or even of common Humanity; while Men, from an impious and insolent Pretence of Zeal for God, have laid waste the noblest Part of his Creation! The contrary Principles of Liberty, and the Right of private Judgment appear to me the true Principles of the Reformation; on which alone it can be defended: Whatever Mistakes some of the first Reformers (who, with all their valuable Qualities, were, at best, but fallible Men) might still retain about these Matters: But, in their Circumstances, it seems far more to be wondered at, that they threw off so *many* Errors, than that they retained *some*. But, certainly, if the Principle of *examining for one's self in Religious Matters*, in Opposition to *relying on human Authority*, be the true Principle of the Reformation; so must the Principles of Liberty of Conscience and the Right of private Judgment be: And it is the most shameful Trifling to explain this Right away, into "a Right of every Man to judge for himself in his own Mind; provided he keeps his Judgment to himself, even while his Conscience leads him to profess it". Such a Right might have been fully and peaceably enjoyed in the Church of *Rome*; without any Necessity of separating from it, or bearing Testimony against its Errors and Corruptions. The Church of *Rome's* being ever so far in the Wrong could never have been a sufficient Warrant to any to separate from it, unless they had

had a *Right to examine* the Decisions of that Church, and judge for themselves concerning them; and also to declare and *profess* that Judgment, and *act agreeably* to it. This therefore is well known to be the great and *fundamental* Point in Debate, betwixt the Abettors of the Church of *Rome*, and the most able Advocates for the Reformation*. And certainly, nothing can be a more inconsistent Part in Protestants, than to deny to others the Liberty they take to themselves; and upon the Justness of the Claim to which the Defence of the Reformation intirely depends †.

For these Reasons, Sir, I cannot allow of the Lawfulness of the Use of Force or Punishment in the Affairs of Conscience or Religion, considered as such; or that Men can be justly liable to be punished by the Civil Magistrate merely for a mistaken Profession of Religion, or a false and erroneous way of Worship.

But as, for the Reasons above alledged, I think, that no Man's Religious Principles, or way of Worship, considered *as such*, can justly *expose* him to be punished by the Civil Magistrate: So, on the other Hand, I think, That no Man's Religious

* See these Points largely handled by those great and able Defenders of the Reformation, Messieurs *Claud* and *Pajon*, in their unanswerable Replies to the *Prejugez legitimes contre les Calvinistes*.

† We don't deny to others the same Liberty which we take to ourselves. *Pref. to the Conf. of Faith*, p. 63.

Nothing is more contrary to the Principles of Protestantism, than Force in Matters of Religion; and Violence much less becomes them, than the Church of *Rome*, whose pretended Infallibility in every respect favours the Doctrine of Compulsion. *Werenfels*, u. s. p. 72.

ous Principles, nor his real or pretended Obligations of Conscience, *exempt* him from Punishment; if they lead him to commit any Matter of Wrong or wicked Leudness, whereby his Neighbours are injured, or the Peace of human Society disturbed: Whether a Man makes Use of a Pretence of Conscience, or the Obligations of the Religion he professes, to palliate such Offences; or is, in Reality, led to commit them by a mistaken Conscience, or the Principles of a false Religion; his doing Hurt, or giving Disturbance, does, of itself, render him liable to Punishment, from whatever Principle it proceeds: The Question, in order to a Person's being liable to Punishment before a human Tribunal, is not, from what inward Principle he acts? (for of this, it does not belong to the Province of earthly Governors to judge) but, what he does? not, Whether his Conscience leads him to do so and so? Whether it be a Part of his Religion; or, what other Principle leads him to it? but, Whether *he does hurt*, or disturbs the publick Peace? If he does, he is liable to be punished, according to the Nature of the Hurt done, or Disturbance given; and as the Ends of Civil Government require: For, it is the proper Province of the Civil Magistrate to preserve the publick Peace, and protect every Member of the Community from Wrong; and to restrain Men from doing Hurt to their Neighbours, or disturbing the Peace of the Society, from any Principle, or upon any Pretence whatsoever.

From hence, Sir, it is easy to see, That the Principles I am now defending, allow it to belong to the Civil Magistrate to punish the venting of any
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ny such Religious Errors as are subversive of Order and Peace in Society; or evidently endanger Mens Lives and Properties; any such Ways of Religious Worship as are hurtful to Men in their natural or civil Rights, such as cruel or lascivious Rites; all violent Disturbances of the Church, or such Attacks upon the Religion received and professed as are real Breaches of the Peace *. It is evident

* Errors, tho' never so impious, are yet distinguished from Peace-disturbing Enormities. If Opinions, in their own Nature, tend to the Disturbance of the publick Peace; either that publick Tranquillity is not of God, or God allows a penal Restraint of these Opinions. It is a Mistake to affirm, that these who plead for Toleration do allow of Punishment for Offences against the second Table, not against the first: The Case is *the same* both in respect of the one and the other. What Offences against the second Table are punishable? Doubtless not all; but only such as by disorderly eruption pervert the Course of publick Quiet and Society. Yea, none but such fall under human Cognizance. The Warrant of exercising vindictive Power among Men, is from the Reference of Offences to their common Tranquillity. *Delicta puniri publice interest.* Where Punishment is the Debt, *bonum totius* is the Creditor to exact it. And this is allowed as to the Offences against the first Table. If any of them, in their own Nature, (not some Mens apprehensions) are Disturbances of publick Peace, they also are punishable: only, let not this be measured by disputable Consequences, no more than the other are: let the Evidence be in the Things themselves. *Owen, u. s. p. 291.*

And *p. 293:* He applies this to the Case of Blasphemies, thus: Blasphemy in the Scripture is never taken in any Place, that I can remember, for a Man's maintaining his own Error; but for his reviling and speaking Evil of the Truth which he receives not.——Now, if Men to whom Forbearance is indulged in By paths of their own, shall make it their Work to cast Dirt on the better Ways of Truth, it is to me very questionable, whether they do not offend against that prime Dictate of Nature, for the Preservation of human Society, *Quod tibi fieri*

evident likewise, that the *View*, in which such things fall under the Cognizance and Lash of the Civil Magistrate, agreeably to the Nature and Design of his Office, is not as they are Religious Errors; but as they are Disturbances of that Peace of Society which it is his proper Province to preserve, and Invasions of those Rights of his Subjects of which he is the Guardian and Protector †.

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Now,

fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris. And for such I will be no Advocate.

And p. 310, &c. He mentions several other Cases and Instances of like Nature: Such Persons, as having embraced any false Principles — concerning God and his Worship, do pursue the upholding and propagating such Principles in a disorderly Manner to the Disturbance of civil Society, are doubtless under his [the Magistrate's] restraining Power, to be acted and put forth in such Ways, as to other Persons running into the same, or the like Compuls of Disorder, upon other Grounds, and from the Instigation of other Lusts. The Pretence of Disturbance and Confusion, upon the bearing with Differences in Opinion about Things commanded in Religion, we before rejected, as a Colour fitted only for the wearing of Persecution. But actual Disturbances indeed must have actual Restraints. — If any Persons whatsoever, upon any Pretence whatsoever, shall offer Violence or Disturbance to the Professors of the true Worship of God, — such Persons are to fear that Power, which is the Minister of God, and a Revenger to them that do Evil.

† If there be a twofold Judicature appointed for the same Person, for the same Crime, is it not because one Crime may in diverse Respects fall under several Considerations? And must not these Considerations be preserved immixed, that the formal Reason of proceeding in one Court may not be of any Weight in the other? We proved before, — that the Church is Judge in case of Heresy and Error, as such, to proceed against them as contrary to the Gospel: — It now this be afterwards brought under another Sentence, of another Judicature, must it not be under another Consideration? Now what can this be but 'tis Disturbance of civil Society? Which when it doth so,

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Now, without confining the Civil Magistrate's Power of punishing within such Boundaries as these, arising from the very Nature and End of his Office; I am not able to see, upon what consistent Principles all the bloody and lamentable Effects of Persecution that have ever obtained in the World can have an effectual Stop put to them; or all the Fury of Persecutors be effectually prevented from returning again, and reacting its horrid Part on the Stage of the World. What confirms me in this Thought is, that I am able to observe only three Schemes concerning the Magistrate's Power of punishing, with Regard to the Affairs of Conscience and Religion, that can be reckoned really different: Either, 1. That which I am now defending, which allows the Magistrate no Right to punish Men for their religious Mistakes, considered as such; but confines his Power of punishing, to such Crimes as disturb the Peace of Society, are subversive of the Government, or invasive of the private Rights of particular Subjects. Or, 2. That, which, allowing the Magistrate's Right of punishing to extend to the Affairs Religion as such, makes the Religion of the Magistrate, or of the Publick, whatever it is, to be the Standard; from which every different Profession or Form is to be violently restrained, and makes Men liable to Punishment: This is plainly the *Hobbiſt*-principle; and the Consequences and Absurdities of it are sufficiently obvious. Or, 3. That which maintains the Magistrate, who is of the

not in Pretence, but really and actually, none denies it to be the Magistrate's Duty to interpose with his Power. *Owen*, u. s. p. 314.

the true Religion, only to have the Right of punishing those who are in a different way. As to this, I observe, *first*, That it makes no Difference as to the Nature and End of the Civil Magistrate's Office, whether he is of the true Religion, or not; provided he has a Capacity for exercising his Government so as to answer the End of his Office for the Peace and Welfare of humane Society in its Civil Concerns: and therefore the Office and Characters of the Civil Magistrate are ascribed in the N. Test. to those who were not of the true Religion, but Idolaters; and Infidelity or Difference in Religion is justly reckoned not to make void the Magistrate's just and legal Authority: To have Government among them, for the Security of their natural and civil Rights, being the common Privilege of Mankind, whatever Religion they are of. Besides, this third Scheme is the very Principle of Persecution maintained by the *Romish* Church: For the Principle of Persecution, as it is maintained by them, (however they do further err in the Application of it) is *not* to persecute Men for the *Truth*, but for their Errors; and the Method of Persecution is only applied by them for reclaiming or extirpating those, who, after the way which they call *Heresy*, so worship GOD. Further, this Scheme, in its Consequences and Application, must come to the same Effect with the second: For that, to every Civil Magistrate, will be the *true Religion*, which he receives for such; and of Consequence, the power of the Sword put in his Hands, for enforcing and propagating of true Religion, and extirpating a false one among his Subjects, must, in Fact, and in the Applicati-

on of it, be always employed for enforcing the Religion of the Magistrate himself, whatever it be, and extirpating whatever is opposite to it : And, considering that, as the Apostle observed long ago, that *not many mighty, not many noble are called*; so, it has been Matter of obvious Observation in all Ages since, how few of the Powers of the Earth have embraced and espoused the true Religion; how seldom many of the great and mighty have shown any Concern about *Truth* in this Matter; and how little is to be expected this way from Men surrounded with worldly Pleasure, Power and Flattery; how apt they are to make no other Use of Religion, than to debase it into a Tool of State, an Engine of Ambition and worldly Policy: considering all this, it may be abundantly obvious, That, as this Principle will always be applied, even the *Profession* of true Religion is not only likely to gain very little, but to lose a great deal in the World by it *. Nor is this a bare

* The learned Dr. Owen, u. s. p. 297, shows, That it is not the Privilege of Truth to furnish its Assertors with this Persuasion, that the Dissenters from it ought forcibly to be opposed, restrained, punished. *Of which he gives a Series of Instances and Proofs; and, among the rest, Cain, says he, seems to me to have laid the Foundation of that Cruelty, which was afterwards inserted into the Church's Orthodoxies, by the Name of Hereticidium.* And p. 298, he mentions the Advice given by *Mecenas to Augustus in Dion Cassius, τὸ μὲν Θεῶν, &c. Worship,* says he, *the Divine Power thyself according to the Constitutions of thy Country always, and at all Times, and compel others so to honour it, but hate and punish those who introduce foreign Religions; not only for the Gods Sake, whom he who contemneth will regard nothing else; but because such, introducing new Deities, do persuade many to transgress, [or, to change Affairs] whence are Conjurations, Seditions, private Societies, Things no way*

bare Point of Theory; a mere probable Representation of what is likely to be, drawn from abstract

way conducing to Monarchy. Hist. Rom. l. 152, and l. 36. The Antichristian Power succeeding into the Room of the Paganish, the Pope and Councils of the Emperors and Senate, it was quickly confirmed, that none should be suffered to live in Peace, who received not his Mark and Name, Rev. xiii. 16, 17. whereunto, for my Part, I cannot but refer very many of those following Imperial Constitutions, which were made at first against the Opposers of the Church's Orthodoxy, but were turned against the Witnesses of JESUS in the Close — The Reasons of this Establishment among the [Pagan] Romans, still common to them who walk in the same Paths with them, were, 1. That Toleration of sundry Ways of Worship, and several Religions, tends to the Disturbance of the Commonwealth and Civil Society. 2. That hereby the Gods were dishonoured, and provoked to plague them — p. 299. See that great Champion Cardinal Bellarmine fighting with these very Weapons, *L. de Laicis*, c. 21. And indeed, however illustrated, improved, adorned, supported, flourished, and sweetned, they are the Sum of all that to this Day hath been said in the same Case. And, p. 390, This was the old Roman Way: And I thought it not amiss to cautionate those enjoying Truth and Authority, that if it be possible they may not walk in their Steps and Methods: The Course accounted so sovereign for the Extirpation of Error, was, as you see, first invented for the Extirpation of Truth. And then he shows, that, as in all Ages the worst of Men have set at the upper End of the World, the general Issue of punishing for Conscience sake, hath been pernicious, fatal and dreadful to the Profession and Professors of the Gospel. And p. 301, This then, in its Latitude, proving so pernicious to the Profession of the Gospel, having for so long driven the Woman into the Wilderness, and Truth into Corners, being the main Engine whereby the Tower of Babel was built, and that which at this Day they cry Grace unto as the Foundation-stone of the whole Antichristian Fabrick†, we had need be cautious what Use we make (as one terms it well) of the Broom of Antichrist to sweep the Church of CHRIST. Whether that we are in the Truth, and they blinded with Error, of whom we have spoken, be a sufficient Plea, we shall see anon. In the mean time

† *Beccaus de fide heret. servanda. Bellarm. de Laicis.*

tract Views of the lamentable Frailties of human Nature, and the Circumstances of the Great: But is confirmed by a long and general Observation of what has happened in Fact, in most Ages and Countries of the World: Do we not plainly see, that what, in most Places of the World, and for many Ages, passes for the true Religion, and is the Religion of the Publick and the Magistrate, is, in Reality, the grossest Idolatry, or the vilest Superstition? and has not the Application of this Principle, " That the true Religion is the particular Care of the Civil Magistrate; that he is " to employ the Power of the Sword for enforcing and propagating the true Worship, and extirpating Error, Heresy and Blasphemy; filled large Tracts of the Earth, for many Years together, with Massacre and Blood-shed? Has it not laid waste famous Countries; and worn out the Saints of the most High from the Earth? Is it not from this Principle, as it has been applied, that the

time we may do well to remember what *Lewis XII. of France* said, yea swore concerning the Inhabitants of *Mirindol*, whom by the Instigation of his Prelates he had ordered to be slain, when News was brought him what was their Conversation and Way of Life; *Let them be Hereticks if you please, (said he) but assuredly they are better than I and my Catholics: Take heed lest the punished be better than the Punishers. Then, p. 302, he represents a perpetual Coincidence of the Causes by them held forth who pretend to plead for just Severity, with their Pretences who have acted unjust Persecution. — The Definition of Heresy is agreed on for the main; only the Papists place the Church's Determination, where others thrust in the Heretick's Conviction, a Thing much more obscure to Bystanders and Judges also. — We use no other Arguments, cite no other Texts, press no other Consequences for the punishing of other Heresies, than the Papists, the wisest Hereticks breathing, do for the Punishment of us.*

the true Worshippers of God have been killed all the Day long, and counted as sheep for the Slaughter; and had their Blood shed like Water round about the Streets of many a famous City? Is it not from this Principle, that many, *of whom the World was not worthy*, have had Trial of cruel Mockings, Bonds and Imprisonments; have been tortured, stoned, slain with the Sword, and even *sawn asunder*; have been destitute, afflicted, tormented? Was it not from this Principle, that the primitive Christians were persecuted as Atheists and Introducers of strange Gods, were harassed and murdered with the most exquisite Tortures, exceeding numerous Deaths? Is it not from this Source, that mystical *Babylon* has become drunk with the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs slain for the Testimony of JESUS? Nay, Was it not from this Principle, as it was applied, that the blessed Son of God and Saviour of the World himself was crucified as a Blasphemer; being run down by the Outcries of a blind and furious multitude, stirred up by their wicked Priests and Rulers; the High-priest, with a well feigned Zeal, rending his Cloths and crying out, "We have heard his Blasphemy"! I know it will readily be replied; that all this has proceeded from a Mis-application of that Principle, and not from the Principle itself: But to this I answer, that this Mis-application is unavoidable, while the Principle takes Place, and while Men are what they are; that this is the Application that always has been, and always will be made of it, while it is a Principle received by the Powers of the Earth; "that to them it belongs to imploy the Sword for supporting
" the

“ the true Religion, and extirpating a false one:”
 Whereas, if it was understood by the Civil Go-
 vernors of the Earth, as it is founded in the true
 Principles of Civil Government, that they are to
 punish nothing, but what may be justly reckoned
 an Invasion of the private Rights of others, or a
 Disturbance of the Peace of Society; the Foun-
 dation and Source of all that Havock, Cruelty,
 and Blood-shed would be quite taken away. In
 fine, Sir, What would have been the Consequence,
 if the Principle “ of the Magistrate’s Right and
 “ Duty to punish his Subjects for their Religious
 “ Mistakes or Errors in Worship, considered as
 “ *such,*” had been *professed* and *understood* to be a
 genuine Principle of Christianity, when it made
 its first Entrance into the World? as it must,
 if it was really so, according to that Sincerity,
 which belongs to the Spirit of Christianity: Had
 this been the Language of the first Preachers of
 the Christian Religion; “ we come now to em-
 “ ploy the Evidence of Truth and Demonstration
 “ of the Spirit, to shew you, that they are no
 “ Gods, that are made with Mens Hands; and
 “ to turn you from Idols, to serve the living and
 “ true GOD: We have no other Weapons *now,*
 “ to compel Men to come into the true Church,
 “ or to stop the Mouths of Gain-sayers, but
 “ those of Instruction and Persuasion; no other
 “ Terrors to persuade Men by, but the *Terror of*
 “ *the LORD*: But, be it known unto you, that
 “ if once the Kingdoms of the Earth were become
 “ the Kingdoms of our LORD and of his CHRIST,
 “ if once we had got the Powers of the Earth
 “ on our Side; we will then inculcate it upon
 “ them

" as their Duty, as they will be faithful and an-
 " swerable to God by whom they reign, to de-
 " fend the Truth, and stop the Mouths of Gain-
 " sayers, by Terrors of another Sort; to bring
 " every Man to the true Faith, or, at least, hin-
 " der him from professing and venting any thing
 " contrary to it, by Fines and Imprisonments, Ba-
 " nishments, Racks and Gibbets, and the like
 " wholesome Severities!" What Reception, do
 you think, what Treatment could such a Religi-
 on have obtained, or expected in the World?
 But as this is far from being the Language of our
 blessed Saviour and his Apostles; so, whatever
 Sentiments some later Fathers, and other Divines
 in yet later Ages, have gone into about that Mat-
 ter; yet the Primitive Christians, in the first and
 purest Ages of Christianity, and particularly, the
 primitive Apologists for Christianity against the
 Pagans, express quite other Principles; and boast
 of it against the Heathens, as a genuine Chara-
 cter of Truth and the true Religion, that it neither
 asked nor stood in need of Force and Violence
 to support it, or to stop the Mouths of Gain-say-
 ers: " The true Religion would animate Men to
 " endure Persecution, but never to persecute*."

D

As

* For 300 Years the Church had no Assistance from any
 Magistrate against Hereticks; and yet in all that Space there was
 not one long-lived, or far spreading Heresy, in comparison of
 those that followed. As the Disease is spiritual, so was the Re-
 medy that in those Days was applied, and the Lord Jesus Christ
 made it effectual. The Christians also of those Days disclaimed
 all Thoughts of such Proceedings. The Expressions of the most
 ancient, as *Polycarpus*, *Ignatius*, *Ireneus*, concerning Hereticks,
 are sharp and cutting, — their Church censures and Ejections
 piercing

As for what you alledge concerning the Consequences of so extensive a Toleration as I seem to plead

piercing and sharp; — but for corporal Punishment to be inflicted on them, in their Writings not a Syllable: until *Augustine* was changed from his first Resolution and Persuasion, by the Madness of the *Donatistical Circumcellians*, this Doctrine had poor Footing in Antiquity: And whether his Reasons as to this Point be convincing, let any impartial Man read his *Epistle* 50, and determine. What some say, that Christians would have been of another Mind, had they enjoyed Christian Magistrates, is so suited to our present Frame and Temper, but so unworthy of them, that I should wrong them by a Defensative. What was their Sense of them, in a spiritual Way, is clear. — Surely had these Men perceived the Mind of God for their bodily Punishment, they would not have failed to signify their Minds therein; but truly their Expressions hold out rather the quite contrary. *Τὸς μισῶντας τὸν Θεόν, κ, λ. Count them Enemies, and separate from them, who hate God; but for beating or persecuting them, that is proper to the Heathen, who know not GOD, nor our Saviour; do not you so?* Ignatius Epist. ad Philad. *Videte ne & hoc ad irreligiositatis elogium concurrat, adimere libertatem religionis, & interdicare optionem divinitatis, ut non liceat mihi colere quem velim, sed cogar colere quem nolim. Nemo se ab invito coli vellet, ne homo quidem.* Tertull. apol. cap. 23. And again to *Scapula* the Governor of *Carthage*, to dissuade him from the Persecution he intended: *Tamen humani juris & naturalis potestatis est unicuique quod putaverit colere, nec alii obest aut prodest alterius religio: sed nec religionis est cogere religionem, qua sponte suscipi debeat, non vi, &c.* — In the three first Centuries many — corrupt Opinions were broached; — but they laid little hold of the Churches, — and did very little promote the Mystery of Iniquity: But afterwards when — the great Men of the Earth — began to interpose in the Things of Religion, and were mutually wooed, instigated, and provoked by the Parties at Variance (as indeed it is a Shame to consider upon all Meetings, Assemblies, Disputes, Councils, what running, what flattering, what Insinuation at Court were used on all Hands) what Root did divers Heresies take, how far were they propagated? Furthermore, by the Ways which were invented — for the Extirpation of Errors, when by the Instiga-

plead for; “ the open spreading of errors, here-
 “ fies, &c. I answer, 1. that it is not so clear as
 you seem to suppose, that I do, in a proper Sense,
 plead for *any Toleration* of Errors and Heresies at
 all. I am not for disputing about Words. If by
 Toleration is only meant “ an Exemption from
 “ all civil Penalties and penal Laws, on account
 “ merely of religious Differences or Errors in

D 2

“ Wor-

Instigation of Prelates, the Emperors were (to their own Ru-
 in) persuaded to them, the Man of Sin walked to his Throne.
 These very Laws — which were obtained against erring Per-
 sons, did the Bishops of *Rome* invert and use against all the
 Witnesses of *JESUS*. The Devil durst nor be so bold as to
 imploy that his grand Agent in his Apprenticeship against the
 Saints; but he first suffers him to exercise his Hand against
 Hereticks, intending to make Use of him afterwards to ano-
 ther Purpose. — Neither did the Christians of old at once step
 into the Persuasion of punishing corporally in case of Reli-
 gion. *Constantine* makes a Decree at first, *That Liberty of*
Worship is not to be denied, &c. — Afterwards, when he
 began a little further to engage himself in the Business of Re-
 ligion, being indeed wearied with the Petitions of Bishops
 and their Associates, for the Persecution of one another,
 what Troubles in a few Years did he intricate himself withal?
 Perplexed he was in his Spirit to see the untoward Revengeful-
 ness of that Sort of People; insomuch that he writes expressly
 to them, being assembled in Concil at Tyre, *That they had*
neither Care of the Truth, nor Love to Peace, nor Conscience of
Scandal, nor would by any Means be prevailed on to lay down
their Malice and Animosities. Socrat. Hist. l. 1. c. 22. —

And when this Knack was once found out of promoting a Sect
 by Imperial Favour, it is admirable to consider how these good
 Princes, *Constantine* and his Sons, were abused, misled, enraged,
 engaged into mutual Dissentions, by the Lies, Flatteries, and
 Equivocations of such as called themselves Bishops. *Ruffin. Eccl.*
Hist. l. 1. c. 15, 16, &c. as also how soon with the ma-
 ny the whole Business of Religion was hereupon turned into a
 Matter of external Pomp and Dominion. *Owen, u. s. p. 303,*
 304.

“Worship;” I am certainly pleading for a free and ample Toleration, to all peaceable Subjects, to profess their religious Principles, and defend them in a peaceable Manner; and to worship God according to their Consciences: and in this Sense, I own, the Word *Toleration* is very commonly used; tho’ I think it may be a Question, whether *very properly*; and whether, to many, it does not convey a very different Idea? In reality, Sir, can a Man, in a proper Sense, be said to be *for tolerating*, what he is heartily for using all lawful and proper Means to *prevent* or *extirpate*? tho’ he is against the Use of Means which he is persuaded are neither lawful nor proper for that purpose *.
Now

* Is the Orthodox Magistrate obliged to *tolerate* all Manner of Errors in his Subjects? He is so indeed, if there be no other *Remedy* for them but *Force* and *civil Penalties*. But I deny this is the *only Remedy*, I deny it is *the properest*; nay, I deny it is a *Remedy at all*. There is no Consequence then in this Argument, “the Civil Magistrate may not extirpate erroneous Opinions by *Force* and civil Penalties; therefore he must *tolerate* them.” CHRIST came not to destroy Mens Lives but to save them; he would not have Fire call’d down from Heaven to consume the *Samaritans*; did he *therefore tolerate* dangerous Errors? The Apostles professed *the Arms of their Warfare were not carnal*; did they *therefore tolerate* the Errors of the Jews and Gentiles which they were sent to extirpate? Did the primitive Christians, who knew how to suffer, but not to offer Violence, tolerate Errors? On the contrary, they, if ever any were, were irreconcilable Enemies of Error, which with unrelenting Enmity they warr’d with even unto Death, attacking it with the greatest Vigour and Resolution, and defeating it with more Success than all the Power and *Force* of Man united, all the *Inquisitors*, *Goalers*, *Rackers* and *Torturers* in the World, all the *Legions*, and *Armies*, and *Dragoons* that have been raised against Hereticks and Unbelievers ever did, *Werenfels*, u. s. p. 83.

Now, I think, I have shown, that the Use of Force or Punishment is neither a lawful nor a proper Method for extirpating Error and Heresy: And I know, Sir, you can easily believe me, when I assure you, that I am most sincerely and heartily for every Man, in his Station, using all lawful and proper Means for defending and propagating the Truth, and extirpating all Errors and Heresies; and that with a Zeal and Earnestness proportioned to the Greatness of the Errors to be combated, and the Importance of the Truths to be defended †. 2. However frightful the Consequences of *such a Toleration* as I plead for may be, the Civil Magistrate is not to go out of his Sphere to prevent them; it does not belong to

† All Persons who have any Interest—in Truth are obliged, in their several Ways and Stations, to an Opposition unto every Error, an Opposition to be carried on by Gospel mediums and spiritual Weapons.—The spiritual Sword of Discipline may be lawfully sheathed in the Blood of Heresies.—When the Cure is suited to the Malady, there is no Danger of the Application. The Blood of many erring Persons, I doubt not, will one Day have a *Quo Warranto* granted them, against their (as to the Particulars in Debate) orthodox Slayers, who did it to promote the Service of GOD. Let them not fear an After-reckoning, who use the Discipline of CHRIST according to his Appointment. This being considered, the Occasion of a most frequent *Paralogism* is removed: If Errors must be tolerated, say some, then Men may do *what they please*, without Controul; no Means, it seems, must be used to reclaim them. But is Gospel-conviction *no Means*? Hath the Sword of Discipline no Edge? Is there no Means of Instruction in the New Testament established but a Prison and a Halter? Are the Hammer of the word, and the Sword of the Spirit, which in the Days of old broke the stubbornest Mountains, and overcame the proudest Nations, now quite useless? God forbid! *Owen*, u. s. p. 295.

to him to use any other Methods for preventing of them, but what are either competent for him in his *general* Character as a good Man, or pertain to the Business of his Office as Civil Magistrate; to neither of which it belongs to use Force or Punishment in the Affairs of Conscience, *as such*: But the Principles I am now defending deprive the Christian Magistrate of no Means of supporting the Truth and suppressing Error, but the Use of Force or the Sword: There is nothing in the Principles I am here defending, to hinder him from giving *positive* Encouragements and Assistances to those of the true Religion, which he withholds from others *. 3. If Matters be not aggravated, these *Consequences* would not be so mischievous and so pernicious to true Religion, as is apprehended and represented; especially if they are compared with the Consequences of the other Principle already mentioned. Allowing that there might be fewer Professors of true Religion, where no Violence was made use of to bring Men to a Profession of it; as a Ballance to this, these few would likely be the more sincere in their Profession; and not receiving their Religion by mere Tradition, but upon fair and free Examination, it would be likely to stick the closer to them, and have the stronger Influence upon them: There might possibly be fewer Worshipers of the true
 GOD

* The learned Dr. Owen, u. s. p. 3c7. 3c8. mentions several Ways, by which the Christian Magistrate may *assist and support the Professors of the Truth, without doing the least Injury to any Person living*. Also the learned Professor Werenfels, u. s. 84, &c. mentions several Ways by which the Christian Magistrate may greatly contribute to the extirpating of Error and Heresy, without the Use of Force.

GOD in a *right* Manner, as to external Appearance; but there would be more true Worship: This was the Case in Fact, when Christianity was not only destitute of Support from the Powers of the Earth, but was opposed by them †. There might too, perhaps, be some greater Liberties taken by the Opposers of true Religion, when free from the Restraints of Force and the Sword, they had full Opportunity to *bring forth their strong Reasonings!* But then, the glorious Triumphs of Truth over them all, by its native Force, would be the more conspicuous: And those Cavils whereby Seducers, by whispering them in Corners, lead captive silly and unwary Souls, would either be ashamed to appear in the Light, and so would be no more propagated than when under violent Restraints; or, if brought forth, their Weakness and Absurdity would be exposed to every one who had Eyes to see; and few, if any, would be in danger of being seduced by them, whose Religion had got any hold of them, who had ever experienced its happy Influence, or had any thing more of it but the Name. And, on the other hand, as Errors might be vented in the few Corners of the Earth where the true Religion is established and professed; so, in the far greater Part of it, where now Truth is violently suppressed; did this Principle prevail, it would have free Opportunity to show its Face; and so, a Reformation of the grossest Errors and most abominable Idolatries might be successfully attempted, where at present the very Attempt is violently precluded.

* *Vid. supra* the marginal Note in p. 25.

ded. So that, in the whole Amount, *true Religion* would be so far from suffering, that it would gain Ground in all Corners of the Earth. And would we confine our Zeal for the Truth to our own little Corner of the World!

I have here allowed, that perhaps, in the Case of an intire Exemption from penal Laws about religious Matters, the Opposers of the received Religion might take the greater Liberties in their Attacks upon it. But this is far from being certain: for oftimes we may observe, that a *Propensity to what is forbid* is a strong Principle in some Tempers; and the most scurrilous Liberties which are taken with received Principles, and those, at the same time, that are most adapted to mislead the unwary and unthinking Multitude, because most suited to their weakness and low way of thinking; arise not so much from a conscientious Persuasion of their Falseness, or Doubt about their Truth; as from a certain *Petulancy*, which is rather cherished than checked by Restraints and Prohibitions; and would hardly have any thing left to stir it up, if there were no such Laws in being as serve only to give it the Appearance (very flattering to such Humours) of being a thing bold and daring: Nor will a greater Severity of Punishments and penal Laws give an effectual Check to this petulant Humour; but only put it upon striving and contriving how to exert itself in the more covered and disguised, the more insinuating and dangerous, Manner. Abundance of Instances of this can be given by such as, in their Travels abroad, have made careful Observations upon the prevailing Humour in those Popish Countries where

where the Power of the Clergy most prevails, and, of consequence, the Inquisition is strictest: They can tell us, that *there* the rudest Attacks are made, not only upon the Peculiarities of the established Faith, but every thing that belongs to Religion; Attacks managed in a way of the lowest Ribaldry and most scurrilous Buffoonry: And the Severity of Restraints leads them only to double their Disguise, and speak so as, tho' they are well enough understood, yet their Meaning is hard to be explained so as to bring Evidence against them; especially when, by betraying a poor Heretick, playing the Pimps to a Priest, or some such Pieces of good Service, they can save themselves harmless. Besides, is it not well known, that nothing has given a greater Handle, to the loosest and most unthinking Infidels, to fall foul upon the Clergy, and, sometimes, on Religion through their Sides; than that Spirit of Persecution, which has been too observable among that Tribe?

When you urge against me, that the Civil Magistrate is God's Vicegerent, to take care of *His* Honour: I answer, That this Character cannot certainly be reckoned to belong to the Civil Magistrate in the most large and extensive Sense; as if he was God's Vicegerent to do every thing which Almighty God Himself might do, if He thought fit in an immediate and extraordinary Manner to interpose in human Affairs and in the Government of the Kingdoms of the Earth*:

E

That

* Shall the Examples of extraordinary Judgments upon Idolaters, false Prophets, by Sword and Fire from Heaven, on Magi-

That, therefore, he must be understood to be God's Vicegerent, only for the Ends and Purposes of his Office ; and in the same Sense as, by the Apostle, he is said to be the *Minister of GOD*; a Title given by Him to Heathen Magistrates; who could not have it for their Province to propagate and defend the true Religion by the Sword, as they were Enemies to it; and, had they understood it to be their Business to employ the Sword that Way, would have employed it *against* that which is really the true Religion. The Civil Magistrate, therefore, is only the Vicegerent and Minister of GOD for the Purposes of his Office ; in which I have already shown, that the Use of the Sword in the Affairs of Conscience is so far from being included, that it is contrary to them. But, is not the Civil Magistrate, as the Minister of GOD, *an Avenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil*? Is it not incumbent upon him then, to punish such evil Deeds as Heresies and false Worship? Take the Answer of the great Dr. Owen : “ The *Paralogism* is so foul and notorious “ in this arguing ; *he is to suppress evil Deeds, Heresy is an evil Deed, therefore that also* ; that it “ needs no Confutation : That he is to punish *all* “ evil Deeds, was never yet affirmed : Unbelief “ is a Work of the Flesh, so is Coveting ; one “ the root-sin against the first, the other against “ the second Table ; yet in themselves both ex-
 “ emptied

Magicians, Apostates, and the like, be here produced? Tho' such Arguments as these have made Thousands weep Tears of Blood, yet the Consequence in Reason cannot but provoke Laughter to all Men not wholly forsaken of directing Principles. Owen, u. s. p. 316.

“ emptied from the Magistrate’s Cognizance and
 “ Jurisdiction : The evil Doers, doubtless, for
 “ whose Terror and Punishment He is appointed,
 “ are such as by their Deeds disturb that human
 “ Society, the Defence and Protection whereof is
 “ to him committed ; that among the Number of
 “ these are Errors, the Depravations of Mens
 “ Understandings, hath not yet been proved.”

U. S. p. 293.

In fine ; when you ask me, “ Must then the
 “ Christian Magistrate do nothing for the Honour
 “ of G o d, by whom he reigns ? ” I readily an-
 swer, Yes ; every thing in his Power, and which
 it is competent for him to do : Every thing he can
 do, for promoting G o d’s Honour, in his general
 Character, as a good Man and a Christian ; which
 he has special Advantages for doing with Influ-
 ence and Success, by virtue of his high Station ;
 and also, every thing which belongs to that Of-
 fice in which he is placed by G o d for the Peace
 and Welfare of civil Society : And, if he is a tru-
 ly good Man and Christian Magistrate, he will be
 animated to a faithful Discharge of all the Duties
 proper to his high Station by a sincere and pre-
 vailing inward Regard to the Honour and Glory
 of G o d. But no Man is to be justified in going
 out of his proper Sphere ; from a pretended, or
 misguided, Zeal for G o d and His Honour : for
 a true and well-conducted Regard to the Honour
 of G o d will lead every Man to keep in that
 Sphere in which G o d has placed him, and to
 keep steadily in that Path of Duty which belongs
 to his Station, without turning aside from it to
 the right Hand or to the left.

Need I take any Notice of the Use some make of such Prophecies as these, concerning the Christian Church; that *Kings shall be their Nursing-Fathers and Queens their Nursing-Mothers*; and *they shall suck the Breasts of Kings*? I have already shown * that, giving positive Assistance and Encouragement to the true Church, and making Provision for its Ministers, is very consistent with the Principles I am defending: And sure you cannot imagine the *true Church of Christ* to be so peevish and pettish a Child, that it will not allow itself to be nursed and cherished, if those who are without her Pale are permitted to live in Peace: Some, who will arrogate to themselves the Name of *the Church*, may possibly be of this peevish Disposition; but certainly we cannot entertain a more unworthy Notion of the true Church of *Christ*. Sure no one will call in question, that our late Queen, of glorious Memory (I chuse rather to speak of the Dead than of the Living) was a true Nursing-Mother to the Church; who yet was as great a Friend to Liberty, and Enemy to all Persecution for Conscience sake, as ever sat on our Throne.

And thus, Sir, I have given you my Sentiments freely; and perhaps at too great length, concerning this important Question: Which I have illustrated by Quotations from some Authors of the best Character in the Protestant Churches; that you may see, that the Principles I have been defending are espoused by Persons of quite another Stamp than those who have been represented

to

* *Vide supra*, p. 28.

to you as the chief Abettors of them: And I thank God I am able to adduce Numbers more of the like unexceptionable Characters, on this side of the Question. I have particularly given some large Quotations from a Treatise of the learned and worthy Dr. Owen, which is in few People's Hands; and that chiefly on account of the Strength of Thought and Argument that is in them: Not that I would make use of his, or any Man's, Authority, in a Point only to be determined by Reason, or by Divine Authority; tho', if we were to lay any Stress upon Authorities in this Question, I believe you'll readily allow, that his might well be put in the Ballance with any one that can be alledged on the other Side: His Reputation for Learning, Piety, and Soundness of Doctrine, has been long and well established in this Church: And sure, in point of *Church Government*, he cannot well be reckoned more unfound among us, than another great Man (whom, out of respect, I forbear to name in this Argument) may be reckoned, with regard to *the Sanctification of the Lord's Day*.

I cannot give a more agreeable Close to this Letter, than to end it with a Story, taken out of the *Jewish Books*; with which an eminent Author on this Argument concludes his Performance.

“ When *Abraham* sat at his Tent-door, according to his Custom, waiting to entertain Strangers; he espied an old Man, stooping and leaning on his Staff, weary with Age and Travel, coming towards him, who was an hundred Years of Age: He received him kindly, wash-
“ ed

" ed his feet, provided Supper, caused him to sit
 " down : but observing that the old Man eat and
 " prayed not, nor begged for a Blessing on his
 " Meat ; asked him, why he did not worship the
 " God of Heaven ? the old Man told him, that
 " he worshipped *the Fire* only, and acknowledg-
 " ed no other G O D : At which Answer, *Abraham*
 " grew so zealously angry, that he thrust the old
 " Man out of his Tent, and exposed him to all
 " the Evils of the Night and an unguarded Con-
 " dition. When the old Man was gone, G O D
 " called to *Abraham*, and asked him, where the
 " Stranger was ? he replied, I thrust him away,
 " because he did not worship Thee : G O D an-
 " swered him ; I have suffered him these hundred
 " Years, although he dishonoured me, and couldst
 " not thou endure him one Night, *when he gave*
 " *thee no Trouble ?* Upon this, saith the Story,
 " *Abraham* fetcht him back again, and gave him
 " hospitable Entertainment and wise Instruction.
 " Go thou, and do likewise ; and thy Charity will be
 " rewarded by the G O D of *Abraham.*" I am,

S I R,

7 JU 66

Yours, &c.



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